

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Volume 53 No. 3

February 17, 2021

suggested donation \$1

The Los Angeles 'Shifters'

HOMEGROWN COMMUNIST FIGHTBACK



LOS ANGELES, February 2—The fight to defend a working-class family and their home against the housing profiteers reveals the seeds of communism.

The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) has always said that the seeds of communism, the egalitarian society that we are fighting for, and that humanity deserves, are already present in everyday life. It is PLP's historical role to nourish the growth of those seeds. We must prepare our new comrades for a lifetime of struggle. We will construct unbreakable political and personal bonds that will withstand all the blows from our class enemy and lead the international working class to victory in that fight. In the midst of multiple crises of capitalism, we in PLP are seeing small but important signs of this revolutionary potential for our class.

At the beginning of the campaign to reclaim the home of a working class family in Inglewood, most of the "shifters", the scores of people who have kept up a 24/7 security watch over the family and their home, thought they would be keeping watch for only a day or two. We were sure the cops would come in almost immediately to raid the home and, for a second time, drag the family out of the house they had lived in for 14 years. But the "shifters", including several PLP members, were wrong – we

have now completed our sixth week of vigilance.

We have learned some valuable lessons and seen some encouraging and uplifting signs during this campaign. The "shifters" are a group of young, committed organizers. Some call themselves socialists, some anarchists, some are attracted to communism. Some just want to fight back against yet another atrocity of capitalism. The gatherings at the house have afforded us the opportunity to have countless, long political discussions with our fellow "shifters", who are hungry for alternatives to what they already recognize to be a deadly, dehumanizing entity – capitalism.

Many ways to win people to communism

We have learned that the Party's line can be brought forward in many creative ways while working in a mass organization – even in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. The co-sponsoring groups, a local non-profit and a tenants' union, organized a virtual forum on Covid-19. From this, we developed a list of "community agreements" aimed at keeping ourselves and the family safe from the virus. The presenter at that forum, a PLP health care worker, put forward a class analysis of the racist, capitalist health care system, which

continues to fail workers affected by the pandemic and its terrible consequences.

We also had an open mic night, at which "shifters", including two Party members, read poetry, played instruments and sang political songs. The artistic presentations gave us another opportunity to put forward the idea that capitalism can never provide housing for everyone. But communism means exactly that: housing for all.

Additionally, there was a forum on how to deal with anxiety in the middle of the pandemic. Everyone understood this has been made worse than necessary by the ravages of capitalism. There were forums on topics as wide-spread as gardening, including growing one's own vegetables, to self-defense. An upcoming forum will discuss the history of tenants and homeowners militantly fighting back against evictions under communist leadership.

Whatever the outcome of the campaign, we have seen a glimmer of the possibility of life under communism. The "shifters", few of whom knew each other before the December 18 reclamation of the house, have developed strong bonds of friendship and support over these last weeks. They see themselves as a community of people, each looking out for the needs of the other and working together to keep each other safe. Invariably a call goes out on the campaign's thread from "shifters" coming on duty as to whether the people already there need anything, be it firewood to keep warm, food, water or other supplies.

Plans to sharpen the struggle

Members of the campaign see this struggle as larger than just saving a single home for a single working-class family. Future actions are planned regardless of whether or not "ownership" of the house is returned to the family. A key one will be an anti-gentrification car caravan through the Inglewood neighborhood, culminating at the SoFi stadium, a concrete symbol of capitalism's voracious appetite for profits over people's needs.

Party members involved in the campaign have openly discussed communism with other "shifters" and have distributed copies of CHALLENGE to both the family and several "shifters". We feel confident that we will soon be able to organize a study group with a number of people in the campaign.

The fight for a communist revolution will be long and hard, but this campaign has shown us that ingredients for the growth of that fight already lie within many of our working class brothers and sisters. We have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a world to win.✱

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

- ★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ★The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

CHALLENGE/DESAFIO (ISSN 0009-1049) published bi-weekly by Challenge Periodicals. 1 issue \$1. One Year: \$20. Six months: \$15. Send address changes to CHALLENGE Periodicals, GPO Box 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202, February 17, 2021•Volume 53 No. 3

Editorial

Navalny Protests

Imperialist Russia’s Internal contradictions fuel fascism

In recent weeks across Russia, tens of thousands of workers in over 100 cities have taken to the streets. Many have risked beatings and jailing to protest the bosses’ oppression and the arrest and imminent imprisonment of Alexei Navalny, the racist, arch-nationalist misleader who is challenging the fascist regime of President Vladimir Putin.

Workers united in militant solidarity can grind the bosses’ profit system to a halt. But when that passion is misdirected in defense of capitalist reformists like Navalny, workers cannot win. There are no good bosses! Though their strategies and tactics may differ, all capitalist rulers rely on racism, sexism, and the exploitation of the working class. They are driven by one principle: maximum profit.

While we don’t know for sure which capitalist forces have orchestrated the latest wave of protests in Russia, we do know that workers there have ample cause for rage: economic stagnation, gaping inequality, repressive security laws, and a deadly bungled response to the coronavirus pandemic. Each day they watch the bosses cheat the working class while ramping up the military for the next inter-imperialist war.

The only solution to capitalist state terror is the total destruction of the profit system: international communist revolution. Choosing one oppressor over another will never liberate our class. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) calls on workers and students in Russia and worldwide to reject all bosses and build for communism and workers’ power.

New nationalist on the block

Navalny has emerged as a symbol of defiance against Putin’s 21-year rule. He first surfaced in the late 2000s with a blog that attacked corruption within the Russian leadership. Despite his blunt criticism of the status quo, Navalny has shown himself to be even more openly racist than Putin’s crew. In a video post from 2007, he compared immigrant Muslim workers from the Caucasus to “cockroaches” that need to be exterminated with “a pistol” (Salon, 4/2/17).

In 2014, after Russia seized Crimea, Navalny applauded the annexation: “The reality is that Crimea is now part of Russia... Crimea is ours” (BBC, 1/23). Russia’s imperialist land grab set off a conflict in Eastern Ukraine between U.S.-backed nationalists and Russian-backed separatists. It has killed at least 10,000 and displaced many more (The Balance, 8/21/20).

With shrewd public relations moves and backing from liberal media, Navalny has rebranded himself as a freedom fighter in front of a small but growing mass movement. In reality, however, his vision for Russia is for a new set of bloodsucking bosses to cash in. Although Navalny has faced assassination attempts as well as legal sanctions, he’s succeeded in securing political office for allies in Siberia, Novosibirsk, and Tomsk (Guardian, 9/13/20).

A weakening of Russia’s dominant bosses

Much like the Donald Trump phenomenon in the U.S., the inroads made by a worm-like Navalny reflect a weakening of the country’s dominant bosses and Putin’s once-iron grip on state affairs. As the contradictions within Russia grow even sharper, we can expect more intense infighting between ruling-class cliques and ramped-up attacks on workers.

In the second half of 2020, Covid-19 lockdowns caused Russia’s GDP to contract by close to 10 percent (Reuters, 7/17/20). According to government sources, unemployment is up at least 30 percent since last spring (Moscow Times, 5/20/20). Even before the pandemic, Putin’s approval ratings took a hit when his government

raised the retirement pension age, which brought out thousands to protest (NBC News, 9/10/18).

Seeing the writing on the wall, Putin’s group has pushed through more openly fascist legislation to protect their control over the state apparatus. One law allows Putin to remain in power until 2036 and grants him life immunity from prosecution, while others make it easier to brand dissidents as “foreign agents” and clamp down on social media (Washington Post, 12/27/20).

Russian, U.S. imperialists on a collision course

Putin and his thieving gang understand the need for a unified ruling class, both to challenge their imperialist rivals and to contain worker fightback. While the isolationist Trump mostly deferred to Putin, new U.S. Imperialist in Chief Joe Biden, represents finance capital, the main wing of the U.S. ruling class. As such, he’ll seek to re-establish U.S. dominance around the globe. The U.S. and Russia are on a collision course.

In his first official phone call as president, Biden warned Putin that the U.S. “will act firmly in defense of its national interests in response to actions by Russia that harm us or our allies” (Wall Street Journal, 1/26). Beyond Crimea, Russian expansionism is evident in proxy conflicts in Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Libya, and Venezuela. U.S. finance capital was alarmed by Russia’s massive SolarWinds cyberattack last December and repeated hacks into the U.S. election apparatus.

As Washington’s arms modernization efforts lag behind Moscow’s, main-wing mouthpieces are clamoring for Biden to renegotiate a Russia treaty that would limit further proliferation of nuclear weapons (Foreign Affairs, 1/19). The finance capital bosses are also troubled by expanded joint military exercises between China and Russia that hint at a potential future alliance (AP News, 12/22/20). For the main-wing U.S. rulers, Navalny is a useful lightning rod—and a possible pretext for imperialist countermoves. On February 2, after Navalny was sentenced to more than two years in prison for trumped-up parole violations, Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for his immediate release and said the U.S. “would coordinate closely with allies about how to hold Russia accountable” (Reuters, 2/2).

Although we cannot predict when or where the next global conflict will begin, the laws of capitalist development tell us that imperialist contradictions are never resolved peacefully. As Putin himself acknowledged at the World Economic Forum, “[T] here is a possibility that we may experience an actual collapse of global development that might result in a fight of all against all” (CNBC, 1/27).

The revolutionary communist tradition

When the international working class takes to the streets, we need to be clear about what we’re fighting for. To support bosses like Navalny or Biden serves to strengthen the brutal hand of the capitalist bosses. Only by marching under the red banner of communism and workers’ power can we advance our class struggle for liberation from the capitalist parasites.

The one future worth fighting for is international communist revolution, led by the Progressive Labor Party. Over a century ago, workers and soldiers in Russia helped point the way to that future. They seized state power from the bosses amid the carnage of imperialist war and established the first workers’ state. Learning from both their triumphs and their errors, we can and will take power again. Workers of the world, unite! Join PLP!☛

New Jersey

Abolish ICE, Smash Borders



Sign reads, "ICE and police are the same crap." They both terrorize the working class.

KEARNY, NJ, January 18—A multiracial, multi-generational crowd of antiracists and communists gathered on Martin Luther King Jr. Day to protest the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention death camps, where 21 workers have died in the past year. Progressive Labor Party and friends seized the day by sharing our ideas with working-class fighters and putting communist tactics into practice.

Incarcerated workers in New Jersey have been protesting their imprisonment and fighting back against the inhumane conditions of the rulers' for-profit jails. Members of the working class from the Congo, Haiti, Honduras, and all worldwide are being forced to live cramped on top of other workers with rats, improper medical care, and all-around neglect. Our class is also experiencing the effects of capitalism in crisis with a raging pandemic to boot. It is the fight of all workers—Black, Latin, Asian, Arab, and white to smash these cages built by both Small Fascists like Donald Trump and the multiracial coalition of Big Fascists like the U.S. President Joe Biden.

Keep communist politics primary

For the last few years, members of PLP have actively fought alongside workers from Movimiento Cosecha to smash the racist division between undocumented and documented workers. With Covid-19 hitting Black and Latin communities at an alarming rate, the struggle and fight have only intensified. In NJ, ICE death camps have the highest rate of Covid-19 in the country (NJ.com, 6/21) and deportation flights have been linked to the confirmed spread of Covid-19 in more than 11 countries (CIDRAP, 1/19). (See article, page 5).

When PLP heard the call that Anti-ICE organizers planned to protest these conditions on MLK Day, we jumped at the opportunity. The plan was to take a heavily trafficked truck route, but as soon as we arrived there were already cops dressed in riot gear. Plans to occupy a large bridge with a small number of workers made our group feel unsafe and put the optics of militancy over building working-class

power. We all agreed to talk to workers involved in organizing the event to collectively and dialectically decide a new course of action.

Build confidence in the working class

We knew we were in the presence of friends when one Black worker said, "The reason ICE exists and Martin [Luther King Jr] was killed are connected—CAPITALISM." We found some faces in the crowd of workers that we met at previous antiracist protests in the summer around the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, two Black workers murdered by kkkops.

As a way to unite struggles, one PL'er chanted, "Citizen and undocumented, same enemy same fight, workers of the world unite!" After a series of speeches, one organizer said while there were fewer protesters than expected, police retaliation was still a possibility. We planned to see how far we could go along the route and keep making communist politics primary.

We marched on the sidewalks along the truck route, shared CHALLENGE with truck drivers, and shouted "worker" as a substitute for "people" in chants. Those marching paused for us to make small speeches about the relationship between racist state terror and the profit system. The bosses divide workers by super exploiting and criminalizing some sections of our class while using the threat of deportations and police to keep us in line. Of course, no worker is free until all are free. We are proud to call ourselves "workers." The "people" in the ruling class are our exploiters who will one day be smashed by a communist revolution. Many workers appreciated this. In response, we gave them CHALLENGE.

Not pro-worker, just nationalist

On his first day in office, Big Fascist Joe Biden signed an executive order halting "most" deportations for 100 days. The same day, antiracist fighters in Portland, Oregon were tear-gassed and terrorized by fascist pigs for hurling rocks at both

ICE and U.S. Democratic Party facilities (ABC News, 1/21).

Days later, Biden instructed the U.S. Justice Department to stop contracting with private prisons but exempted ICE. Meanwhile, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who gave supporters of Small Fascist Trump moral support earlier in the day, before they stormed the U.S. Capitol, successfully sued the halt in deportations (Time, 1/26).

Contrast this with Biden silence on the U.S. ambassador to Guatemala William Popp, a previous appointee of Trump, endorsed the violent repression of more than 9,000 migrants at the hands of Mexican and Guatemalan bosses' police forces (Bangkok Post, 1/23). The Biden administration said they would refuse these workers fleeing hurricane-stricken Honduras. They will only afford some concessions for the documented and undocumented workers that are already present domestically, but not the ones that are currently fleeing their homes due to U.S. bosses' imperialist crises.

Biden doesn't care about workers in the U.S. or internationally. His goal is to convince workers that their loyalty lies with the U.S. bosses, and not with our class brothers and sisters who risk their lives crossing their deadly borders. Biden will use nationalism disguised as multiculturalism to build a war-ready nation to fight U.S.'s imperialist rivals China and Russia. PLP says turn this imperialist war into a class war to smash all borders.

Hate nationalism? You might be a communist

When workers refuse to identify with any of the bosses' nations and make the choice to unite around our class's common interests, we are showing other workers what it takes to build communism. PLP is an international, communist party that's committed to fighting racism, sexism, and exploitation in our neighborhoods, schools, and jobs. The class struggle may reveal a communist inside all of us! Join PLP to join the fight!✊

Workers resist liberal bosses' sick school plan



PLP believes that a safer and healthier world is possible when the working class takes power and runs all aspects of society. That's communism.

CHICAGO, January 24—“We’re doing this for people we don’t even know, and the fact that we can acknowledge that and Janice Jackson can’t, speaks about her character.”

Dozens of multiracial high school students braved the 24 degree fahrenheit weather to lead a protest at the house of Janice Jackson, the chief executive officer for Chicago Public Schools(CPS). They showed their disgust with the racist CPS reopening plan by speaking, marching, and dancing in the street. Members of the international communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) proudly helped lead chants and lent a bullhorn to call out the racist nature of education under capitalism and the need for revolution.

Student demands

Their demands called for better mental health resources for students and teachers, passing grades for all students, remote learning and no school re-openings until they can meet more acceptable safety standards. Jackson did not make an appearance, although many of those present saw curtains close as they stood in front of her house.

Student after student spoke about the racist conditions that existed in their schools even before the coronavirus pandemic. As one antiracist fighter explained, “The problem with the schools [goes] much deeper than [Coronavirus], and getting more resources into the schools. It’s the whole way education is structured.”

In this period of growing fascism and war preparations, the young antiracist fighters like those who attended this protest represent a key force to challenge the bosses’ deadly plans and to lead our class to liberation.

No safe schools under capitalism

CPS opened schools to pre-kindergarten and special education cluster students in January. Students, parents, and school workers have shown their disdain for the CPS “safety” plan because it is highly deficient. Only 20 percent of eligible students attended, and they were disproportionately white (Chicago Tribune, 1/28).

Teachers and other school workers have conducted several protests, including car caravans and teaching outside. Starting January 27, kindergarten to 8th grade students were to attend in person. But a “work remotely” action called by the teachers’ union forced CPS to cancel in-person classes.

More than 85 percent of Chicago Public Schools students are Black, Latin, Native American, or Asian. In Chicago, Black and Latin families have disproportionately higher numbers of cases or deaths from Covid-19, but few have been vaccinated. In this segregated city, maps showing the vaccine rollout so far expose these rotten disparities.

Probably no one person has been more vocal to force the students and teachers back into the classroom than “progressive” and Black Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot. Lightfoot and her liberal racist allies desperately want to reopen the schools so they can justify opening up businesses and return to profiting off workers by exploiting us again.

We must not let her hypocritical pleas about students’ safety and well being disguise her true intent. This is the same mayor who just over a year ago fought tooth and nail against better staffing

and resources in public schools!

As communists, we oppose identity politics because it calls for toxic all-class unity with the bosses on the basis of race, gender, nationality or sexual orientation. Lightfoot is not antiracist just because she’s Black. A boss is a boss! All of them exist to prop up this racist, sexist system.

Only by building multiracial working-class unity under communist leadership can we create a movement and Party powerful enough to crush racism and sexism for good.

Big Fascists build for world war

PLP is working to win these students and others to see that communist revolution is the only answer to capitalism. By joining in common struggle with our working-class sisters and brothers in actions like marches and strikes we build our collective understanding and power.

President Joe Biden and his goons are leading the charge to keep the United States as the number one imperialist power. To do so, they will go to war against China and its allies and gladly slaughter millions of workers in the process to preserve their system. These liberal bosses and their billionaire backers are the more dangerous Big Fascists whose drive for power will create the kind of death and destruction that makes Donald Trump look tame by comparison (see glossary, page 6).

What we do today counts. A system that can’t provide education or health care for the people shouldn’t exist! A growing PLP will, in time, end capitalism and create the communist world that the students at this protest, along with billions of other working-class people, deserve.🌐

Capitalism can't keep up with Covid-19 mutations

We have heard a lot about mutated viruses and whether they are more contagious or more deadly than the original Covid-19 virus from Wuhan. Covid-19 has been multiplying countless times around the world. Capitalism has been unable to control the pandemic and the resultant infinite viral replications that are occurring are resulting in more dangerous mutants. As CHALLENGE has pointed out (See Page 8, February 3, 2021), the chaotic nature of capitalism in crisis combined with massive inequality has resulted in the uncontrolled spread of the virus in most countries.

What is a mutated virus?

Genetic information is stored in two types of molecules, Deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA which is a double-stranded nucleic acid, and Ribonucleic acid or RNA which is a single-stranded nucleic acid. Frederick Engels wrote in the Dialectics Of Nature, "Life is the mode of existence of protein bodies...." The DNA molecule consists of two strands that wind around each other like a twisted ladder. The DNA and RNA molecules contain the codes for the proteins that are the building blocks of all life.

Viruses have none of the metabolic machinery needed to produce the proteins needed to replicate. Covid-19 is a virus that contains RNA. It is an RNA virus. Covid-19 only reproduces when it is in a cell that is capable of allowing the viral RNA to take over the cell's metabolic machinery and produce the proteins needed to replicate. Sometimes, when the RNA is being replicated, an inexact replica is made and the resultant viral particle does not survive. Most of the time replicating errors or mutations are harmful to the virus. Rarely the mutation results in a viral particle that is more efficient at traveling from one person to another or at penetrating a cell or causing more severe disease or resistance to a vaccine.

Healthcare for profit limits the fight against Covid-19

It is more likely that these mutations will be identified if the viruses being isolated from people have their RNA sequenced. In the U.S. this has been done for about 0.3 percent of viral isolates (Forbes, 1/8). In other countries, the viral sequencing has been more thorough, but not nearly enough to keep up with the rate of mutations. A big factor limiting sequencing is that capitalism struggles to organize



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science or health care if it isn't highly profitable. The lack of coordination and organization has characterized the global response of capitalism to the pandemic in general and sequencing in particular.

Describing the sequencing problems in the state, California Public Radio said "The lab network remains fragmented, and there isn't substantial collaboration facilitated by the state, ...[for example] the state's new diagnostic laboratory in Valencia is not equipped for genomic sequencing, [and] has limited ability to send samples to outside labs for this work" (cpradio.org 2/1).

As the virus has mutated, capitalist chaos limiting sequencing around the globe is becoming a factor, along with things like racist dilapidated health care systems and massive inequality, that has allowed the virus to continue to spread.

Our class, the working class, has suffered horribly because of the callous disregard of the capitalist rulers. Only when the working class seizes power will we be able to create a society where our health is the primary concern of the healthcare system. Capitalism will not put the health of the working class above their profits. It must be smashed.☛

Racist Covid-19 crisis in U.S. concentration camps

The U.S. injustice system's racist treatment of undocumented workers, intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic, is proof of the necessity of organizing society without borders and exploitation.

In its desperation to intimidate, criminalize and build racism against undocumented workers, 110,100 have been imprisoned by the U.S. Government since March 2020. The dangerous conditions inside Immigration and Customs Enforcement concentration camps, made much more so by the pandemic, led to hunger strikes by 2,500 detainees nationwide from last March to July. Recently detainees at three northern NJ prisons, where NY detainees are also sent - Essex, Hudson, and Bergen County Jails - have struck to protest their continued endangerment.

According to a report published by The Detention Watch Network, as of August 2020, the rate of Covid-19 infections identified by ICE, is over 13 times that of the general population, despite sparse testing.

As of December 23, ICE admitted to 73 cases in two New Jersey jails on strike. At least two deaths have been recorded at the Essex County Detention Center. And even those numbers are low since anyone who leaves a facility to be released or deported or transferred is no longer counted.

In a dorm of 48, no masks allowed

In an interview with an imprisoned worker at Essex County, he said prisoners live in crowded 48-person dormitories and are not allowed to wear masks. He never had a Covid-19 test. In some medical visits, his temperature was not even taken. He also developed a serious heart rhythm problem

that requires hospital treatment, but he was only seen by the on-site MD, who gave him a medicine contraindicated by his asthma and never saw him again. The diagnosis subsequently disappeared from his record. For participating in the December strike, the administration transferred him to faraway Buffalo, NY detention.

It is estimated that ICE detention centers have been responsible for 245,000 Covid-19 cases throughout the country (CNN, 12/11/20), by virtue of the high infection rate among staff who come and go from the community as well as detainees who are released undiagnosed. Moreover, hundreds of deportees have tested positive for Covid-19, including over 330 in Guatemala (Arizona Republic, 10/28/20). The U.S. capitalist government has no concern for workers' health anywhere.

Only crime? Being a super-exploited worker

The major crime for which undocumented workers are arrested is the crime of existing as an undocumented worker. Some are arrested during a routine traffic stop (ProPublica, 4/2/18). Immigrants, documented and undocumented, make up 17.4 percent of the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 5/29/20). They toil in laborious jobs like agriculture, meat packing, home health, construction, and many low-wage service jobs.

While the bosses criminalize workers for conditions their profit-system created, they get away with the biggest crime of all—super-exploitation and racist state terror. The profiteers celebrate their mechanism to divide workers against one another—white versus Black, Latin, and Asian—citizen versus undocumented—a way to keep all workers down. What capitalist profiteers get is hundreds of millions of dollars paid

to private prison owners who house 70 percent of detainees, like GEO and Corrections Corporation of America. Municipalities like Hudson County and Essex County, NJ rake in near \$120 per day for each prisoner through contracts with ICE (Patch, 1/6).

Biden, enemy of workers

Some hope that all will change with president Joe Biden and vice president Kamala Harris.

Remember—it was under Democrats in 1996 that mandatory detentions and expedited removal of immigrants were written into law. It was under the Obama and Biden administration that over three million immigrants were deported, more than in all previous administrations combined, and family detentions escalated. Furthermore, while the Obama administration deported 1.18 million people in his first three years, the number of deportations has been a little under 800,000 so far under Trump" (The Hill, 11/18/19). Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats are friends of the working class.

Biden represents different interests than the Small Fascists. It is the economic and international peril of U.S. imperialism that dictates what we really can expect of any administration. As the U.S. position's in the world declines and is flooded by a capitalist crisis, the Big Fascists' main task is to ready their society for war and fascism (see glossary, page 6).

Progressive Labor Party is involved in mass actions to free immigrants, like many that have occurred outside the NJ jails. We are in organizations that oppose ICE and its health policies, like Physicians for Human Rights, Cosecha, and DSA Immigration Committee (see page 3). We fight to liberate all workers from the bosses' criminal system and their racist borders. ☛

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

**CAPITALISM
BREEDS SEXISM
RACISM
& IMPERIALISM!**



**FIGHT FOR A COMMUNIST
WORLD
BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL
PLP!
PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY**

Raise hell with radios!

I recently discovered a WBAI radio talk show in New York city called A New Day airing at 7 am when many workers commute to jobs with their cell phones. I was able to get on the air a few times already and got to mention our www.plp.org website.

Recently I got on the air about the Bronx Hunts Point Teamsters strike that was attacked by police. I said:

Police are the corporate dictatorship's first budget priority because they break strikes and demonstrations that threaten their bosses' profits. I was with transit workers who shut the city down for eleven days in 1964 and we won because as the bosses said, 'You've got a gun to our heads'. Workers need to understand their power when united. Teamsters feed the city, they need to organize with transit, hospital, sanitation, service and delivery workers, and the public to build a working-class party to run society.

I think some of our Party members with important struggle experience could get on these many talk shows and bring our Party to workers.

★★★★★

Collectivity versus individualism

The February 3 issue of CHALLENGE had an excellent back page article comparing capitalist individualism/freedom with communist collectivity. But what is this individual freedom and how is it tied so closely to capitalism?

Let's look at the question of vaccines. Do we all have the individual freedom to choose to get vaccinated? No. Not only is there not enough of a supply but also the distribution has been badly handled by a government mostly interested in protecting big business and their profits. But there could be a much greater supply. Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca are "free" to compete to

enter the vaccine market with inferior 70 percent effective vaccines. But for the last two months, they could have already been producing the 95 percent effective vaccines that are already approved.

And facilities in India and South Africa could be producing generic versions of those vaccines. But capitalist production for profit won't allow production for human needs. For the last two months, workers around the world could have been cooperating on how to get everyone vaccinated much sooner rather than later. Instead, capitalist ideology teaches us to "jump the line" or just use bribery as many rich people are doing. And to justify this individualistic, selfish behavior, we are told it's human nature.

The CHALLENGE article gives some examples of communist collectivity from China and Russia when they were socialist societies led by communists. Some remnants of that collectivity remain today. But there are numerous examples today of working-class collectivity all around the world. Like most things, collectivity is a class issue.

Capitalists compete and exploit their workers. So they promote individualism and selfishness. Workers fight back and have to stick together just to make any little headway against capitalist exploitation. That's working-class collectivity.

We see it today with the massive antiracist protests against police murders and with essential workers in hospitals going the extra mile caring for their patients. We see it in the massive recent strikes in India. We see it during wars, disasters, and economic crashes all caused by capitalism. Workers going out of their way to help other workers. We need to develop this working-class collectivity into communist collectivity so we can organize a revolutionary movement to get rid of capitalism once and for all. Join the Progressive Labor Party!

★★★★★



Why call them Big Fascists

Here's a letter about a discussion our area had about why we call the dominant capitalist wing "the Big Fascists." I think one of the reasons is because they are the ones who will lead the workers in the U.S. into the next world war.

I wanted to add that the Big Fascists are slicker. The Small Fascists are the open KKK members, Nazis, and Proud Boys. They are very open about their racism which keeps them a little smaller in numbers and more fringe-like.

However, the Big Fascists have their culture and media to build a larger fascist movement. They can get many good people to "fight for freedom," "fight for democracy," or "fight for the best government there has ever been."

Like former U.S. President John F. Kennedy's famous quote, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country!" It is fascist. Getting lots of workers to think

that they are fighting for what is good and merciful when it is really for the power and profits of the capitalist class.

★★★★★

Substitute teacher's take on capitalist negligence

I am a substitute teacher in Indianapolis who has worked a total of one month and three days this entire school year due to schools being reopened late due to coronavirus infections and then reclosed again in early November after only being opened previously for a month.

The first school I was assigned to, I regularly worked at before the pandemic. The first day back, it was dangerous. In the Kindergarten class, I had worn masks that were too big, they did not know how to socially distance, the desk partitions were cheap foam, and the children had no understanding of why keeping their masks on was important. The school bosses were not fully prepared. I made up my mind to not take any assignments with K through second grades.

The next assignment I had was long-term teaching Spanish in another elementary school. This school was a mini superspreader, as some students and staff contracted Covid-19. Every day for a month, I was taking a chance on my life as I have preexisting asthma. The school's leadership was anti-working-class and was sloppy on Covid-19 protocols such as on social distancing with staff and students. The principal was a joke. I was damn lucky I did not contract Covid-19. Meanwhile, two teachers in metro school districts died from Covid-19.

Shortly before my last day, the school board announced schools would shut back down due to Covid-19 levels being too high.

Covid is a virus of capitalism. Under communism, schools would not be opened during a pandemic, as alternative learning methods will be used. It's social murder to send teachers, support staff, and students to die in these schools.

★★★★★

CHALLENGE response: *We can all agree that the bosses' schools are unsafe. School reopening is a lose-lose dilemma for our class. Remote learning treats students' minds as expendable while in-person learning treats students' safety as expendable. Either way, there is no regard for health, mental, or physical. Is the choice to stop working in those schools pro-worker? It might be helpful to think about essential workers and how it represents an impossible choice for them, too. The working class has never had it easy.*

There is no returning to safe schools under capitalism. Young children, especially Black and Latin, are highly vulnerable to the bosses' attacks. The students' minds and health, where you choose to decline assignments, are not disposable. More than learning, schools provide health services, lunch, physical therapy, counseling, and other related services. Calling to keep schools closed "until they are safe" without recognizing this reality, and without genuine planning for student needs, undermines the cause of building working-class solidarity. As communists and members of the working class, we must be a part of the struggle. One step is to ask comrades and your co-workers how they are fighting for students during this capitalist crisis.

Glossary communist political terms



Capitalism's response to a crisis of their system, when the bosses can no longer sustain the charade of liberal democracy and resort to more direct control and state terror instead. Fascism is marked by the ruling capitalists disciplining their own ranks to serve the urgent needs of the capitalist state and weather the crisis. To defend their system from internal and external threats, they use all the means available in their state apparatus, including violence. To build unity within their class and loyalty from workers, they rely on nationalist politics and calls for sacrifice. Their strategy is to mislead the working class to kill our working class sisters and brothers in the next inter-imperialist war.

Big Fascists

The Big Fascists are the dominant finance capitalist faction of the U.S. ruling class. They represent the wealthiest and most powerful bosses in the U.S., including multinational banks like Chase and Citibank, multinational oil companies like ExxonMobil, the big automakers, Boeing, Amazon, and the major media companies. As the dominant grouping since World War II, the Big Fascists were the architects of the liberal world order with the U.S. bosses on top. Their dominance rests on U.S. financial and military power and its strategic control of the Middle East and the flow of oil to Europe, Asia, and Africa. To sustain this dominance, they need to rebuild a huge, multiracial military for inter-imperialist war, most likely with China.

Small Fascists

The Small Fascists are a group of domestically oriented U.S. capitalists who are challenging the Big Fascists over the direction of U.S. imperialism. Since their interests are less tied to controlling the flow of oil, they are against heavy taxation to keep troops in the Middle East and in general oppose costly military bases and invasions. They're willing to rely on a smaller, whiter army, backed by nuclear weapons and the Air Force. They have used open racism to build a political following.

Rest in Power

Phil: a red teacher, singer, fighter

Phillip Lawrence Batton, a member of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) for more than half a century, who advanced the working class as a thinker, teacher, singer, and self-taught linguist, died on January 22 after fighting off a series of illnesses.

Phil was born in 1939 in Clairton, Pennsylvania, a segregated steel mill town just outside of Pittsburgh. He grew up in the shadow of where his father worked for most of his life. But were it not for his talent for football, he might have followed his father to work at U.S. Steel Clairton Coke Works. An athletic and fearless sophomore halfback on Clairton's varsity football team, Phil incurred a serious head and neck injury that left him temporarily paralyzed. He recovered, and though his left side was atrophied, he never lost the graceful swagger to his stride and gestures.

Phil's accident made him eligible for a free college education, and he seized the opportunity. The first person in his family to attend college, he graduated from California State Teachers College. Having taught himself Spanish as a teenager, Phil became fluent after living with a family in Mexico City in the summer of his junior year. Armed with his degree, Phil applied for teaching jobs at local schools, only to be rebuffed by racist administrators who'd ask, "What position did you come to apply for—janitor?"

In 1963, Phil moved to New York City and East 100th Street. His roommate was Harvey Mason, who became a lifelong friend and comrade. Soon Phil became a Spanish teacher at JHS 117 and Harbor JHS for the Performing Arts in East Harlem—El Barrio. There Phil was radicalized by City College students who'd joined Progressive Labor Movement, a newly formed communist organization that took the lead in breaking the travel ban to Cuba, fighting back against police terror, and organizing anti-imperialist resistance to the Vietnam War. In the late 1960s, after PLM grew into Progressive Labor Party, Phil joined and became a club leader in the New York teacher work.

Phil made another huge contribution as a member of the PLP Singers, who created two



memorable albums of anti-racist and communist songs in the early 1970s: "Power to the Working Class" and "A World to Win." Phil's rich bass-baritone voice anchored the group's harmonies. His solos on songs like "Clifford Glover" and "They Shall Rule the Earth" were sweet and strong and lyrical, with unforgettable moments of understated emotion. He was always willing to rehearse and perform and spread the ideas of PLP through music.

Though an unpretentious man of few words, Phil could sing or say or write them in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Russian, or Chinese, all of which he'd learned on his own. He translated numerous articles into Spanish for CHALLENGE and other PLP publications. His astute critical analysis lives on in publication.

Phil continued to teach at JHS 117 until he retired and moved to Iowa City, Iowa, to study for a master's degree in anthropology. Then he returned to New York to teach medical Spanish at physicians' assistant certification programs at Bronx Lebanon Hospital and Harlem Hospital. Phil traveled several times to Brazil and once to Costa Rica. A person of boundless curiosity, someone who never stopped learning, he loved studying computer science, aviation, anthropology, Marxism-Leninism, and African and African-American history. He even built his own telescope to photograph the surface

of the moon with his daughters. Phil's love of music and film had a big impact on all of his children, but especially his eldest daughter, Rachel, who became a film and television producer.

Phil enjoyed a full social life and cherished his family and friends. His quiet charisma and jovial disposition made every room he entered a more wonderful place to be. He'd use his knowledge to spark conversation and inspire others, but never to dismiss or demean. He shared relationships with workers from all walks of life. He truly believed we are all equal.

Phil was married in 1970 to Barbara Watanabe, a fellow teacher and political organizer. They divorced in 2008, following a long separation, but remained close friends. He is survived by Barbara and their three daughters: Rachel Watanabe-Batton, Diana Emiko Batton-Fitzgerald, and Jennifer Tomiko Beaugris, his two sons-in-law, and three grandchildren.

After traversing the world near and far, Phil's illnesses of late confined him to a Bronx nursing home. But his working-class spirit, his sense of who he was, remained strong to the end. On the last day of his life, Phil was comforted by the songs he'd recorded with the PLP Singers all those years before.🕯

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

China's top bosses made \$1.5 TRILLION from pandemic

NYT, 1/21 — Annabel Yao is....a member of China's rarified elite, the younger daughter of the billionaire...chairman of the telecommunications giant Huawei....[But] Ms. Yao, 23,...opining about her social status, her struggles, her up-by-the-bootstrap pluck, seemed to strike a raw nerve in a country that is still emerging from a public health crisis and an economy that has left millions out of work....The pandemic has left the wealthiest even better off in China...widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots.... China's wealthiest families added \$1.5 trillion to their personal wealth over 2020....Ms. Yao graduated from Harvard....

Even after death, racism maintains income inequality

NYT, 1/16 — For the Black community, the prospect of an heir's paying capital gains tax on inherited property could contribute to maintaining the racial wealth gap....The average Black family passed on \$38,000 to heirs, while the average white family passed on \$140,000.

Hospital bosses sue over unpaid bills

NYT, 1/6 — When the coronavirus began spreading through New York, Gov. Cuomo ordered state-run hospitals to stop suing patients over unpaid medical bills....Northwell Health,...the state's largest health system...is run by one of Mr. Cuomo's closest allies. The "non-profit" Northwell sued more than 2,500 patients last year....Each

[suit] sought an average of \$1,700 in unpaid bills, plus large interest payments. They hit teachers, construction workers, grocery store employees and others, including some who had lost work in the pandemic or gotten sick themselves....

Across the country, medical debt lawsuits have grown increasingly common...as insurance companies have shifted more of the burden onto patients through larger deductibles and co-payments. The cases...usually lead to default judgements, allowing hospitals to garnish wages and freeze accounts, sometimes without the patient's knowledge.

....About 50 hospitals in New York have sued...5,000 patients since March....

The Northwell system operates 23 hospitals,...brings in about \$12.5 billion in annual revenue and received \$1.2 billion in emergency funding through the stimulus package in the federal CARES Act....It sued over unpaid bills as small as \$700 last year.... Elizabeth Benjamin...at the Community Service Society...criticized hospitals for suing patients during the pandemic....

She said that a few hundred dollars may not mean much to a hospital chain but can be a significant burden for a low-income patient. "It means someone is going hungry...[or] a kid is not getting a winter coat."

John Mather hospital on Long Island...owned by Northwell,... sued Scott Buckley for \$21,028, plus \$4,000 in interest and fees. "I am literally broke," said Mr. Buckley, who works at a Stop &

Shop grocery store. "I don't have a penny to my name. I have three kids. If they take my paycheck, I won't have anything."

New York's non-profit hospitals had filed more than 40,000 lawsuits against patients between 2015 and 2019....Northwell [Ed. note: Cuomo's friend] sued patients far more often than any other hospital chain — about 14,000 in that period.

CObama/Biden deported 3 million with jobs, homes and children

NYT, 1/24 — Lucia Quiej, an undocumented mother from Guatemala...was raising her five children by herself.... Her husband.... Mr. Jimenez was among three million people deported under the Obama administration — many of whom had jobs, homes and children in the United States. They were banished to Mexico and beyond. More than four years later, Ms. Quiej's family remains separated. She still struggles to pay rent....

Mr. Biden's...harm that was done when he was vice president...left communities fractured and financially devastated....

...The American Psychological Association...noted that those [separations] carried out under Mr. Obama could cause "serious mental health deterioration and trauma in children."

Mr. Obama did separate those with roots in the United States....The Obama administration...criminaliz[ed]...immigrants, shattered families and...led to rampant [ICE] abuses....Mr. Biden's.... plan doesn't mention banning ICE detainers or discouraging police cooperation with ICE.

ANNIVERSARY OF LIBERATION OF A NAZI DEATH CAMP

RED ARMY
DEFEATED FASCISTS



Pictured here: the Red Army liberates children from the Nazi's Auschwitz death camp.

The anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration camp on January 27, 1945, shows how the communists defeated fascism.

May 1945 was the end of one of the most horrendous capitalist systems the world has suffered. The fascist Nazi government of Germany led by Adolph Hitler was defeated by the Red Army of the Soviet Union led by Joseph Stalin. Today there are many anticommunist lies about World War II, the Nazi period, and especially about the role of the then-socialist Soviet Union in smashing the fascist German forces. As we commemorate the liberation of the Auschwitz camp, let's refute some of those lies.

Liberals and conservatives lie about World War II

The capitalist media never stops rewriting history. In the Public Broadcasting System's series "The Messengers," one of the episodes begins with someone saying: "My biggest mistake was to believe that the Red Army won World War II" (PBS, 1995). The Red Army did win World War II. Nine out of 10 German casualties were at the hands of the Red Army.

The liberal PBS is not alone in lying about WWII. In 1995 the "historian" of the U.S. House of Representatives, Christina Jeffrey, was fired when it was publicized that in 1986 she had criticized a school curriculum on the Holocaust by complaining that the perspectives of the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan were not included in it (New York Times, 1/11/95).

The truth about the Nazis

In 1933, Hitler took power with the support of most of the German bosses. He began what he thought was going to be the "Thousand-Year Reich [empire]". He ordered the building of the Dachau, Oranienburg, and Buchenwald concentration camps. These were the first of what was to become 900 big and small concentration camps that existed until the end of the war. One of Hitler's first decrees introduced the concept of Schutzhaft – preventive imprisonment of "enemies of the state." First, last, and always, these were mainly communists.

Hitler was very specific about the role of these camps. "Brutality inspires respect ... The masses need someone to inspire fear and make them tremble and submissive ... I don't want concentration camps to become family housing. Terror is the most efficient political instrument ... Those who are discontent and disobey us will think twice before confronting us if they know what is waiting for them in the concentration camps."

The Red Army liberated Auschwitz

Twelve years later, the Third Reich's "thousand-year" reign of terror was cut short by the communist movement. Around 3 p.m. on January 27, 1945, Soviet troops of the First Ukrainian Front of the advancing Red Army, led by Marshal Ivan S. Konev, saw a sign that read: "Arbeit Macht Frei" – "Work Makes You Free" – on the top of the main gate of Auschwitz. The Nazis called these death camps "labor camps."

These troops saw with their own eyes what up to then was only a suspicion based on messages smuggled out from the concentration camps: the incarceration and systematic elimination of Jewish and Romani workers, and political "deviates" (read: pro-communists). It was all part of the plan created by the top leadership of the Third Reich, which murdered millions (El Mundo, 1/8/95).

The Red Army troops found 7,000 prisoners. These prisoners were left behind by the Nazis be-



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cause they were too weak to move (and, despite the efforts by the Red Army to save them, many died). A few days earlier, knowing the Red Army was getting closer to Auschwitz, Hitler ordered the camp closed. On January 18, the Nazi SS (Schutzstaffel-elite Nazi squadron)–Hitler's killer-troops–led the "March of Death" of 60,000 Auschwitz prisoners to Buchenwald, another death camp. Thousands of prisoners died on this march.

But the United States had delayed entering World War II for at least a year. They were hoping the Nazis and the Soviet Union would weaken each other. So the 42nd and 45th Divisions of the U.S. Army did not get to the Buchenwald concentration camp until April 11, just a few weeks before the Red Army liberated Berlin and ended the war. But the 5,000 prisoners that remained at Buchenwald had organized a rebellion and had killed most of the SS guards. The same thing happened at Dachau when at 9 a.m. on April 29, dozens of prisoners stopped the SS men from eliminating all the inmates by fighting them. It was not until nine hours later, at 6 p.m., that the 42nd and 45th Divisions entered Dachau and joined the fight, which lasted until the early morning of April 30. 30,000 survived the order, issued by Heinrich Himmler, chief of Hitler's SS, to kill all the prisoners. But it was the rebelling prisoners that saved these lives. Many more would have been saved if the U. S. had not delayed entering the war.

The Soviet Union defeated the Nazis

Today the capitalist regimes in Poland, Ukraine, Finland, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, deny that the populations of these lands were "liberated" at all (though Jewish organizations continue to insist that the Red Army were indeed liberators). Everything is being done to excuse the Polish, British, French, and U.S. capitalist rulers, who sabotaged all efforts to stop Hitler. Instead, these capitalist rulers urged Hitler to invade the Soviet Union and put a stop to the communist movement, and the socialist Soviet Union, which did everything possible to stop the Nazis and whose troops ultimately beat the fascist scum.☒

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